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AUTHOR Ruediger, Greg; Lorance, Anne
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ABSTRACT

This article describes a university teacher training program for preservice teachers of students with mental retardation that emphasizes adult learning theory, case method teaching, communication, and clinical experiences to bridge research and practice. A review of the literature examines adult learning theory, Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, case method teaching, and clinical experiences. The following section describes a teacher training program based on these principles and includes four clinical experiences. Appendices include: (1) an application of Bloom's Taxonomy to the proposed curriculum; (2) an interaction analysis activity for students observing a classroom; (3) a sample case study; and (4) a guide to self-evaluation following simulations and microteaching activities. (Contains 21 references.) (DB)

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Preservice Clinical Experiences: A Bridge for Teachers and Students

Dr. Greg Ruediger, Assistant Professor
Department of Special Education
Troy State University Dothan
Dothan, Alabama

and

Dr. Anne Lorance, Associate Professor
Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Troy State University Dothan
Dothan, Alabama

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Principal Author Address:
Dr. Greg Ruediger
Troy State University Dothan
P.O. Box 8368
Dothan, Alabama 36304-0368

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Abstract

In the future, it is apparent that the level of empowerment experienced by persons with mental retardation will be greatly impacted by the quality of preservice teacher training programs. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to describe a university teacher training program that promotes the empowerment of all students. Emphasis is placed on adult learning theory, case method teaching, communication, and clinical experiences that build the bridge between research and practice. An example of a teacher training program is presented.

Mental retardation is not something that can be simply and scientifically defined, discussed, dissected, applied or studied. Mental retardation is related to our very understanding of humanity, of human potential, of educability, of equality, of rights and privileges, of everything we are and everything that relates to us (Blatt, 1981). The many complexities associated with mental retardation are reflected by the paradigm shifts in the field. First, from the early to middle 1900s a facility-based model was present that brought individuals in need of differential treatment into institutions and other residential programs. Despite numerous sincere attempts to assist persons with disabilities, this model eventually resulted in warehousing, involuntary sterilization, and generalized poor treatment of many persons with mental retardation (Polloway, Patton, Smith, & Smith, 1996). This mistreatment (Blatt & Kaplan, 1967) coupled with the principle of normalization (Wolfsenburger, 1972) led to the service-based paradigm which focused on providing assistance to help individuals with mental retardation integrate into society. However, while the promise for integration was often implicit, it was not imminent for many individuals. Many students remained in special classes, individuals became life-long residents of group homes, and sheltered workshops were permanent work sites for adults with mental retardation (Smith, Ittenbaach & Patton, 1998).

Recently, the movement has been toward a supports-based paradigm for persons with mental retardation. The assumption of this model is that individuals should be maintained and assisted in inclusive settings in order to insure successful learning, work experiences, and adult adjustment (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank & Leal, 1999). As a result, there has been the advent of full inclusion school programs, the providing of job coaches in the community, and the creation of

supported living opportunities (Smith et al. 1998). The essence of the emerging supports-based paradigm is the emphasis on empowerment (Polloway et al. 1996). Empowerment refers to a constellation of processes and activities that involve people in determining their own futures (Thompson, Lobb, Elling, Herman, Jurkiewicz & Hulleza, 1997). At the personal level, empowerment occurs when individuals are confident they have the information and problem-solving skills necessary to conquer challenging situations (Balcazar, Seekins, Fawcett & Hopkins, 1990; Gutierrez & Ortega, 1991). This sense of empowerment helps individuals attain a high level of personal fulfillment. Educators play a vital role in the empowerment process of persons with mental retardation.

Teachers who employ instructional "best" practices help students acquire a wide repertoire of life skills. For example, these teachers use data to drive instructional decision making and routinely choose the most positive behavior change strategies possible so that students have the opportunity to learn appropriate behavior, social and problem-solving skills, and responsibility for themselves. Effective teachers also are those who use instructional time to design learning activities that promote the present and future success of students with mental retardation (Brown, Branston, Hamre-Nietupski, Pupmpian, Certo & Grunwald, 1979). In the future, it is apparent that the level of empowerment experienced by persons with mental retardation will be greatly impacted by the quality of preservice teacher training programs; therefore, the purpose of this paper is to describe a university teacher training program that promotes the empowerment of all students.

Designing Teacher Training Programs That Build the Bridge Between Research and Practice

Preservice educational programs have primarily relied upon traditional lecture methods. We teach college students with the "hope" that they will absorb the countless facts, strategies, and procedures that are presented to them. For example on written examinations, professors ask students to recall and recite information that will be "essential" to their professional career. Despite outstanding performance on written tests, many students fail to make the connection between university classroom performance and school settings. University faculty must explore adult learning theory and build the bridge between theoretical and empirical knowledge and practice.

Adult Learning Theory

In exploring adult learning theory, Knowles (1990), suggests that adults are autonomous and self-directed learners who have accumulated a foundation of life experiences and knowledge that impacts their ability to acquire new information. Adult learners are routinely goal and relevancy oriented and must see a reason for learning knowledge; knowledge has to be applicable to their work or other responsibilities to be of value to them. Yet another adult learning theorist, Knox (1983), further suggests that university faculty need to consider a variety of factors that promote the absorption and retention of information among future teachers. Some of those factors are: (a) adults have diverse learning styles; what works for one may not work for another, (b) adults need to be active participants in the learning process rather than passive data recipients, (c) adults learn through interaction with other adults, (d) adults want feedback, (e) adults respond to solution-based information that can be directly applied to their lives, (f) and adults are

interested in problem centered vs. information centered material, they want to know how and why. University faculty, with an understanding of adult learning theory can use Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives as a framework to design teacher training programs (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956).

Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

Bloom's Taxonomy provides a classification scheme that is intended to help educators understand and discuss their problems with greater precision. For example, some teachers believe their students should "internalize knowledge," others desire their students to "really understand," still others want their students to "grasp or comprehend the material." Do all of these teachers mean the same thing? By referencing the taxonomy as a set of standard classification, teachers are able to define and communicate educational goals and objectives. Bloom's Cognitive Taxonomy of Educational Objectives contains six major classes that will be briefly discussed (A detailed description of each may be found in Bloom et al. 1956).

1. Knowledge - involves the recall of specifics and universals. The knowledge objectives emphasize the psychological processes of remembering. The process of relating is also involved in that a knowledge test situation requires the organization and reorganization of a problem such that is will furnish the appropriate signals and cues for the information and knowledge the individual possesses.

2. Comprehension - represents the lowest level of understanding. It refers to a type of understanding or apprehension such that the individual knows what is being communicated and can make use of the material or idea being communicated without necessarily relating it to other material or seeing its fullest implications. The class of comprehension can further be subdivided into translation, interpretation, and extrapolation.

3. Application - is the use of abstractions in particular and concrete situations. The abstractions may be in the form of general ideas, rules of procedures, or generalized methods. The abstractions may also be technical principles, ideas, and theories that must be remembered and applied.

4. Analysis - is the breakdown of communication into its constituent elements or parts such that the relative hierarchy of ideas is made clear and the relations between the ideas expressed are made explicit. Such analysis are intended to clarify the communication, to indicate how the communication is organized, and the way in which it manages to convey its effects, as well as its basis and arrangement. The class of analysis can be further subdivided into the categories of elements, relationships, and organizational principles.

5. Synthesis – is the putting together of elements and parts so as to form a whole. This involves the process of working with pieces, parts, elements, and arranging and combining them in such a way as to constitute a pattern or structure not clearly there before. The synthesis class is comprised of the subcategories of the production of a unique communication, production of a plan or proposed set of operations, and derivation of a set of abstract relations.

6. Evaluation - is making judgments about the value of material and methods for given purposes. Quantitative and qualitative judgments about the extent to which material and methods satisfy criteria. Use of a standard of appraisal. The criteria may be those determined by the student or those which are given to him. Judgments are made in terms of internal evidence and external criteria.

Case Method Teaching

Case method teaching is an approach university professors can use to expose students to the higher classes of Bloom's Taxonomy. Cases are short narratives that help students understand some of the issues and problems that youth encounter in their daily life (Boyle, Danforth, Shea & Baur, 1997). Cases connect theory with practice and "bring to life" much of the actual knowledge that college students have learned throughout their education, particularly when problems are explored in an environment of shared inquiry (Harrington & Garrison, 1992). In this environment, the instructor guides the "knowledge to application" process of students through particular examples derived from cases. Clearly there are many advantages for using cases to teach preservice teachers. The foremost advantage is that cases require college students to be actively engaged during instruction. Cases require that students attend to and focus on discerning

important facts of the case from the extraneous material. Cases also require students to analyze, interpret, and use data to develop solutions to complex issues (Wassermann, 1994). Case studies coupled with clinical experiences help preservice teachers generalize their knowledge from college settings to public school classrooms.

Clinical Experiences

Garland and Shippy (1995) discussed the importance of clinical experiences in teacher education programs. They suggest that clinical experiences should be planned and designed based on professional education society guidelines to promote the generalization of knowledge from college settings to public school classrooms. For example, The International Standards for the Preparation and Certification of Special Education Teachers (Council for Exceptional Children, 1996) provides a comprehensive list of knowledge and skills that could be incorporated in clinical experiences for all preservice teachers. Their requirements include specific competencies in philosophical, historical, and legal foundations; characteristics, assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation; instructional content and practice; planning and managing the teaching and learning environment; managing student behavior; communication and collaborative partnerships; and professionalism and ethical practices. Educational society specifications provide the foundation to design teacher training programs that build the bridge between research and practice.

Major components of successful clinical experiences include highly structured interactions among preservice teachers, local institutions, and university faculty. University faculty must assume the responsibility of creating graduated experiences that help preservice teachers gain proficiency in teaching. For example, to enhance skill acquisition and generalization, clinical experiences need to be strategically scheduled prior to or after the completition of a series of

course work. For example if students have recently completed a course on classroom management, they can observe and collect data on individual student behavior or classroom environments. Clinical experiences might also utilize focused observations on effective teaching behaviors, the collection of environmental data to design functional behavioral assessments, and participation in collaborative planning. Another emphasis of these pre-student teaching experiences is the use of microteaching, simulation, and interaction analysis to help students acquire skills in recording and analyzing specific components of the teaching act in order to refine their own teaching behavior.

An additional clinical experience focal point is to help students understand the importance of the communication process in order to be effective teachers. Communication can be thought of as a flow of information. Before communication can take place, a purpose, expressed as a message to be conveyed, is needed. It passes between a source (the sender) and a receiver. The message is encoded (converted to symbolic form) and is passed by way of some medium (channel) to the receiver, who retranslates (decodes) the message initiated by the sender. The result is a transference of meaning from one person to another. Four conditions have been described that effect the encoded message: skill, attitudes, knowledge, and the social-cultural system. Special emphasis is placed on how attitudes influence our behavior. It must be understood that we are restricted in our communicative activity by the extent of our knowledge of persons with mental retardation. Clearly, the amount of knowledge the teacher holds about their subject will effect the message he or she seeks to transfer.

A wide variety of clinical experiences also focus on how children with mental retardation grow and develop in their own unique environment. Emphasis is placed on how ecological

variables can be altered to foster optimal cognitive, socio-emotional, and psychomotor development. Specific preservice learning experiences focus on the impact of a child with mental retardation on the family (nuclear and extended), the interconnectiveness of family and professional service providers (educational, medical, and other community resources) and the principle of normalization as it relates to contemporary inclusive environments.

A Summary of Teacher Training Program Components

Despite outstanding performance on written tests, many future teachers fail to make the connection between university classroom performance and school settings. Therefore, university faculty need to explore adult learning theory in the design of teacher training programs. University faculty should have an enhanced understanding of how adults learn and use Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives as a classification scheme to build the bridge between research and practice. Successful teacher training programs emphasize coursework that contains case studies and clinical experiences that highlight the importance of communication and how language impacts the quality of life of students.

An Example of A Teacher Training Program That Builds the Bridge Between Research and Practice

A series of university courses and clinical experiences prepare preservice teachers to accept the responsibility of teaching students how to learn; master reading, writing, and computation skills; develop problem solving skills; use today's technology to complete tasks; learn how to work with diverse populations; and to overcome barriers that arise in new situations. University faculty can use Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives to organize

learning opportunities that help students acquire a wide repertoire of knowledge in a variety of subject areas (See Appendix A). Some of the courses students will complete include:

Year One (Freshman)
ENG 101 Composition and Modern English I
ENG 102 Composition and Modern English II
HUM 200 Humanities in the Western World
ENG 205 World Literature
ENG 211 American Literature
PHI 201 Introduction to Philosophy
MTH 102 Finite Mathematics
MTH 111 College Algebra
PSY 200 General Psychology
EDU 100 Introduction to Education (Clinical Experience #1, See Appendix B)

Year Two (Sophomore)
BIO 100 Principles of Biology
HIS 101 History of Western Civilization
SOC 275 Principles of Sociology
PSY 210 Developmental Psychology
SPH 242 Essentials of Speech
GEO 210 World Regional Geography
POL 241 American National Government
SCI 233 Physical Science
ECO 251 Principles of Macroeconomics
HPR 200 Physical Education
EDU 200 The Legal System and Education (Clinical Experience #2, See Appendix C)

Admission to the Teacher Education Program

Students must be formally admitted to the Teacher Education Program prior to entering their junior year in college. Admission is based on the following criteria:

1. Students must have completed 63 semester hours (105 quarter hours) with a Grade Point Average of at least 2.5.
2. Students must have passed a basic skills test.
3. Students must have successfully completed EDU 100 and EDU 200.
4. Students must have three letters of recommendation.

Year Three (Junior)
EDU 301 Cultural Foundations of Education
EDU 312 Contemporary Educational Issues: Excellence and Inclusion
PSY 303 Educational Psychology
PSY 302 Educational Measurement and Evaluation
EDU 346 Educational Assessment
EDU 347 Professional Collaboration
EDU 330 Curriculum Development
ECE 301 Introduction to Early Childhood Education
SPE 340 Exceptional Children
SPE 344 Introduction to Mental Retardation
EDU 300 Today's Students (Clinical Experience #3, See Appendix D)
Year Four (Senior)
SPE 410 Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners
RED 472 Teaching Reading
EDU 450 Teaching Math
EDU 420 Infusing Technology in Education
EDU 401 Classroom Management and Organization
SPE 405 Adapting Instruction for Diverse Learning
EDU 400 Teaching Today (Clinical Experience #4, See Appendix E)
SPE 451 Professional Internship

Summary

Educators play a critical role in the empowerment process of persons with mental retardation. Teachers who employ instructional "best" practices help students acquire a wide repertoire of life skills. In essence it is imperative that teacher training programs provide a variety of meaningful field experiences that future professionals will be able to reflect upon, adapt if necessary, and utilize appropriately. Such a wheel of experiences embedded in the curriculum will build the bridge between theoretical and empirical knowledge and practice.

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APPENDIX A

AN APPLICATION OF BLOOM'S TAXONOMY (1956) OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

			Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
Year 1			X					
ENG	101	Composition and Modern English I	X					
ENG	102	Composition and Modern English II	X					
HUM	200	Humanities in the Western World	X					
ENG	205	World Literature	X					
ENG	211	American Literature	X					
PHI	201	Introduction to Philosophy	X					
MTH	102	Finite Mathematics	X	X				
MTH	111	College Algebra	X	X				
Year 2								
PSY	200	General Psychology	X	X				
EDU	100	Introduction to Education (Clinical Experience #1)	X	X	X			
BIO	100	Principles of Biology	X					
HIS	101	History of Western Civilization	X					
SOC	275	Principles of Sociology	X					
PSY	210	Developmental Psychology	X	X				
SPH	242	Essentials of Speech	X	X	X			
GEO	210	World Regional Geography	X					
POL	241	American National Government	X					
SCI	233	Physical Science	X					
ECO	251	Principles of Macroeconomics	X					
HPR	200	Physical Education	X					
EDU	200	The Legal System and Education (Clinical Experience #2)	X	X	X	X	X	X

APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

			Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
Year 3								
EDU	301	Cultural Foundations of Education	X	X				
EDU	312	Contemporary Educational Issues: Excellence and Inclusion	X	X				
PSY	303	Educational Psychology	X	X				
PSY	302	Educational Measurement and Evaluation	X	X	X			
EDU	346	Educational Assessment	X	X	X			
EDU	347	Professional Collaboration	X	X				
ECE	301	Introduction to Early Childhood Education	X	X	X			
SPE	340	Exceptional Children	X	X	X			
SPE	344	Introduction to Mental Retardation	X	X	X			
EDU	300	Today's Students (Clinical Experience #3)	X	X	X			
Year 4								
SPE	410	Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners	X	X	X	X		
RED	472	Teaching Reading	X	X	X	X		
EDU	450	Teaching Math	X	X	X	X		
EDU	420	Infusing Technology in Education	X	X	X	X		
EDU	401	Classroom Management and Organization	X	X	X	X		
SPE	405	Adapting Instruction for Diverse Learning	X	X	X	X		
EDU	400	Teaching Today (Clinical Experience #4)	X	X	X	X		
SPE	451	Professional Internship	X	X	X	X	X	X

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APPENDIX B
Interaction Analysis

Students will use the following interaction analysis for an hour in four different settings (early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school) to identify student and teacher talk. Behavior is recorded at three second intervals.

1. ACCEPTS FEELING: accepts and clarifies the feeling tone of the students in a nonthreatenting manner. Feelings may be positive or negative. Predicting or recalling feelings is included.

2. PRAISES OR ENCOURAGES: praises or encourages student action or behavior. Jokes that release tension, but not at the expense of another individual; nodding head, or saying "um hm?" or "go on" are included.

3. ACCEPTS OR USES IDEAS OF STUDENTS: clarifying, building, or developing ideas suggested by a student.

4. ASKS QUESTIONS: asking a question about content or procedure with the intent that a student answer.

5. LECTURING: giving facts or opinions about content or procedures; expressing his own ideas, asking rhetorical questions.

6. GIVING DIRECTIONS: directions, commands, or orders with which a student is expected to comply.

7. CRITICZING OR JUSTIFYING AUTHORITY: statements intended to change student behavior from nonacceptable to acceptable pattern; bawling someone out; stating why the teacher is doing what he is doing; extreme self-reference.

8. STUDENT TALK---RESPONSE: talk by students in response to teacher. Teacher initiates the contact or solicits student statement.

9. STUDENT TALK---INITIATION: talk by students, which they initiate. If "calling on" student is only to indicate who may talk next, observer must decide whether student wanted to talk.

10. SILENCE OR CONFUSION: pauses, short periods of silence, and periods of confusion in which communication cannot be understood by the observer.

Adapted from Amidon, E. J. & Flanders, N. A. (1971). *The role of the teacher in the classroom* (Rev. Ed.). Minneapolis, Minnesota: Association for Productive Teaching.

APPENDIX C
An Example of a Case Study

Do Rules Work?

Carol Seaver, a student teacher in art, realizes that her junior high school students are used to many different classroom management styles and tries to develop her own techniques. She wonders why rules figure so prominently in all classrooms but seem so ineffective.

I began my student teaching as an art specialist in a large urban junior high school. I am responsible for more than 1,200 students a week. My cooperating teacher, Ms. Merino, has been a specialist for more than 25 years in the school system and has given me a lot of insight into how art education has changed over the years. She has been a great model for me and agrees with my philosophy that art should be interesting and fun for all students, integrated into all subjects students study, and show students how art surrounds them in their everyday life.

Our activities include multicultural non-Western art and interdisciplinary studies; we focus on multiple intelligences. For example, we play music and have the students visualize the various types of line that the piece represents, or we use visual aids to help students with their projects. We also allow students to express their bodily-kinesthetic intelligence by working in the manner that's most comfortable for them.

In this school the art room has been taken over for use as a regular classroom, and we travel from class to class teaching "art on a cart". Last spring I did a practicum experience with this same teacher and now I am back for a full semester beginning in September, I was surprised to notice that the students act very differently in the beginning of school than they did in the spring. The classes seemed much easier to manage last spring than they do now! I have a better appreciation for how important it is to establish classroom management during the first weeks of school.

There has been much confusion in the first few weeks and Ms. Merino has worked hard to define and teach the students the behavior she expects during art. Most of the children (but not all) have a basic understanding of what is required to create a productive safe art class, After every lesson, the two of us reflect on the lesson's success and what needs to be altered to make it better. I have learned that a lesson may be successful in one class and bomb in another. I think the success of a lesson can also be determined by the class size and the classroom environment.

I know that cooperative learning groups are important for developing interpersonal skills, but they have been a problem because we don't have our own room. Some teachers have the room set up so that the students are facing each other. Others (we call these teachers spatially challenged) have cluttered, messy rooms that can make the students or anyone coming into the room feel

claustrophobic. As a result, students talk constantly and ignore the instructions and the demonstrations. There are times when I can't get the students to cooperate and listen to instructions, so I move their desks into rows, the old fashioned way.

After having read our college textbook on classroom management and considering my experiences at this school, I have come to a surprising realization about rules. I think they promote misbehavior. There is a prominent list of class rules in every classroom, but they don't seem to be at all effective. An example of this is one of the seventh-grade classes. All the rules are posted in the room as if they will be magically followed, but at 2:45 the same students are sitting in the gym for detention for talking too much, not doing their homework and so on. Most of the students have been in detention since the first day of school and continue to have it every afternoon. It is obvious that the rules and this method of punishment are not working. I think the posted rules help set up negative expectations for students' behavior. It is almost as if they challenge the students to break the rules in a power struggle. Some teachers have the offending student write 100 or 200 times "I will accept my responsibility". Writing something so many times does not solve the problem.

So as a specialist teacher, I have come up against two issues. My first question is why so many teachers post rules that don't work while ignoring the need to teach acceptable behaviors. My second question is probably one that all departmentalized teachers face: how do I deal with the diversity of classroom management styles that my students are used to while establishing my own techniques?

Questions

1) What do you think of Carol's assessment that rules promote misbehavior? What does she mean by that? Do you agree?

2) How do you think the physical environment of your classroom has affected your classroom management in a departmentalized one? What arrangement of desks or tables has worked for you? What has caused difficulty?

3) Do you think classroom management in a self-contained class is different from management in a departmentalized one? What techniques will help Carol establish her own style?

What effects of punishment have you seen in your own experience? Based in your understanding of motivation theories, decide what alternatives to punishment you would use.

Rand M. K., & Colangelo, S. S. (1999). *Voices of student teachers: Cases from the field*. New Jersey: Merrill.

APPENDIX D
Interactive Teaching Functions

Spanjer (1972) identified five interactive teaching functions. His framework includes managing classroom behavior, asking questions, interacting verbally, communicating nonverbally, and reinforcing pupil behavior. Students following simulations and microteaching activities will focus on answering the following questions:

1. How did I actively involve all of the students?
2. How did I allow for the differences in the abilities of the students?
3. Did I make adjustments in my lesson? Why or Why not?
4. Did I prepare adequately so that the students had my undivided attention?
5. Did I have interesting questions prepared in advance, based on Bloom's taxonomy?
6. Did I listen to the students and respond accordingly?
7. Was I able to maintain a classroom environment that all students felt comfortable in?
8. Did I ask my teacher if I would have been more successful with modifications?